Phthisis Amongst Convicts At Chatham
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its point. The weapon had entered between the fifth and sixth rib, just below the left nipple, and had been driven in with such force that its point could be felt in the back between the tenth and eleventh. The blade was so firmly fixed, that all attempts to pull it out were at first unsuccessful, even a small vice failing to cause the least movement. At length it was rotated slightly, and then came away with ease. The man died five days later of pleurisy, without having at any time brought up any blood, or suffered from vomiting. At the *post mortem* it was found that the pericardium had not been wounded, but that the sword, after transfixing the lower edge of the left lung, had passed right across the stomach, its course being marked by two punctures, one in the anterior surface, and the other in the lesser curvature, had just missed the descending aorta, and had finally traversed the body of the twelfth dorsal vertebra from before backward; the left pleura was covered with recent lymph and its cavity contained a serous fluid, and the lower part of the left lung was consolidated; the heart appeared to be fatty. Death was no doubt determined by the pleurisy and pneumonia, aggravated by the weakened condition of heart. The total absence of vomiting and of peritonitis after a double wound of the stomach is not a little remarkable; the punctures were clean cut, and the absence of extravasation of food and of hæmorrhage was probably due to the mucous membrane pouting through the wound, and so closing the punctures. Another point of interest about the case was that certain of the convolutions of the parietal lobule on the right side, containing the centres, according to Ferrier, for the amputated limb, appeared to be atrophied, the intervening sulci being unusually deep and wide.

DEAN SWIFT.

THE question of the nature of the malady from which this distinguished author suffered for many years, and which ultimately terminated in his insanity, is considered by Dr. Bucknill in *Brain*. After citing numerous passages from his letters and journal, he arrives at the conclusion that, from the age of twenty years, Swift was beyond doubt the subject of auditory vertigo, or Ménière's disease, which subsequently gave place to dementia with aphasia. Dr. Bucknill considers that the labyrinthine vertigo had an indirect effect in the causation of the insanity, but does not maintain that there was any extension of the local disease to the brain. The symptoms of this now well known form of vertigo appear to have been well marked in the Dean's case; and Swift himself has aptly described his condition as *vertiginosus, inops, surdus, male gratus amicis*. The article is of interest as showing how, with the advance of pathology, new light is thrown on the disorders of our illustrious ancestors.

PROPOSED HOSPITAL FOR NORTH LONDON.

IT is proposed to found a general hospital in north London, and a provisional council has been already formed for the purpose. The deficient hospital accommodation in the northern districts has been long felt; and not only has it been frequently adverted to by the medical and daily press, but has formed one of the hospital questions discussed within the past year by the members of the Social Science Congress; and formed part of a memorial to the Home Secretary by the British Medical Association. During the past few years, the question of hospital reform has received much public attention. In the foundation of the new hospital, the judgment of those reformers who have had large experience of hospital affairs will be followed, rather than established precedents. The following are a few of the principal features of the new scheme. 1. It is intended to combine a paying with an eleemosynary institution, and to establish a graduated scale of payments. 2. Provision will be made whereby paying patients may be treated by medical attendants of their own selection. 3. The out-patient department will be placed under such restrictions as shall ensure that those only receive gratuitous treatment who are fit objects of charity. 4. The government of the hospital will be by honorary officers, and, as far as possible, will be representative of all classes of the community. 5. In the committee of management, the medical officers will be adequately represented. By adhering to these principles, it is believed that the affairs of the hospital will be administered with efficiency and economy; that the abuse of the institution by the prosperous classes will be prevented; and that the money of the charitable will be spent on those only for whom it is intended, viz., the really necessitous poor. The provisional council, which is headed with the names of Sir Andrew Lusk, Bart., M.P., Mr. McCullagh Torrens, M.P., it is intended, shall be largely increased. The honorary secretaries are George W. Potter, M.D., 12, Grosvenor Road, N.; T. F. Black, 52, Queen Victoria Street, E.C.; and James Clunes, 19, Highbury Terrace, N.; of whom all information may be obtained.

PHTHISIS AMONGST CONVICTS AT CHATHAM.

IN alluding to the high rate of sickness in the Chatham Prison during 1880-1, the medical officer, in his last annual report, states that the climate of the locality, owing to the vicissitudes of temperature, is ill-adapted for invalids suffering from scrofula or diseases of the chest. According to his observations, the winter there is very trying to such cases, especially during the months of February and March, when keen easterly winds prevail at times, accompanied by rain, snow, or sleet. This severity is severely felt by prisoners employed at out-door labour, particularly those working at the dockyard extension, where the positions are much exposed. Cases of phthisis occurring among the prisoners, unless removed to hospital at an early stage of the disease, and subsequently sent to an invalid station, frequently run a rapidly fatal course.

ANALYSTS IN POISONING CASES.

THE recent decision of the Home Secretary to modify the present system of conducting analyses in poisoning cases, has elicited an important letter in the *Times* from "Public Prosecutor" in Edinburgh. Speaking with authority, he thinks that there are certain considerations which outweigh all that can be said in favour of the step taken. The question whether a person is to be put upon trial in such cases always largely depends upon the results of analysis; and this renders it necessary that the most impartial and effective means should be employed for the purpose. The Crown has, in the interest of the community and the accused alike, the whole responsibility of the proceedings, and hence is best fitted to select analysts—much better than an irresponsible body, or rather individual. Since, too, not to speak of the probability that persons to whom the selection of the analysts is committed will have no more special knowledge of the subject than the Crown advisers, medical men have themselves been the administrators in most of the obscure cases of poisoning, it is impossible to predict that no undue influence would be brought to bear in order to secure a special nomination. The contention that it is at least reasonable that representatives on behalf of the accused should also have an opportunity of conducting an analysis is regarded as having merely an air of plausibility, and as being, when examined, unworthy of support; so that, on the whole, there is no call for the proposed change. "Public Prosecutor" argues against a defence analyst, that, in the case of an accused, but innocent, person, the choice being given of leaving the matter of analysis to the Crown experts, he would prefer breaking down their testimony to having an independent analysis made, the result of which he must believe to be at least likely to disclose traces of poison by whomsoever administered; and the fact that the accused's own experts agreed with those of the Crown would be regarded as conclusive of guilt. But, on the other hand, if advantage were not taken of the opportunity, a jury would be apt to conclude that this was not done because of the consciousness of guilt. In short, if a separate analysis were allowed, an accused person would in all cases be placed between Scylla and Charybdis; feeling, on the one hand, that if he did not take advantage of the option his neglect would be attributed to a consciousness of guilt; and, on the other, that if he availed himself of the opportunity he must run the risk of thereby sealing his own doom. The plan adopted in the Lamson case, of the Crown appointing two analysts when a criminal

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